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VALIANT FIRST
FREE COMIC BOOK DAY
ARMOR HUNTERS
FEATURING
RAI
JONES
13

FCBD SPECIAL

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VALIANT FCBD 2014 ARMOR HUNTERS SPECIAL

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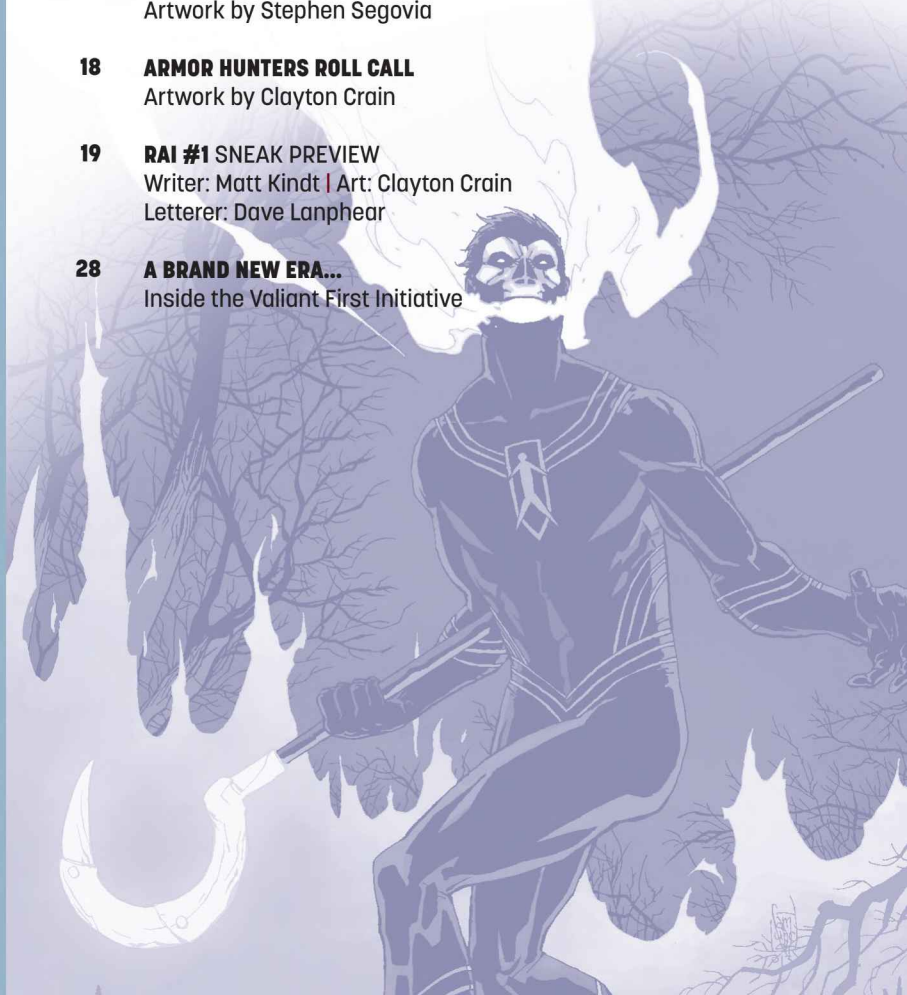


#1 SNEAK PREVIEW

VALIANT FIRST

ARMOR HUNTERS

RUSSIA.
INSTITUTE OF APPLIED WEAPONS SCIENCE. THEORETICAL DIVISION.
UNDERGROUND BUNKER 13.
WUNNK WUNNK
<NO ANSWER FROM UPSTAIRS!>
WUNNK
<EVERYONE ELSE IS *DEAD*, CAPTAIN.>
<IS THERE ANYTHING IN THIS ROOM WE CAN USE?>
NYET.
<EVERYTHING IS STILL IN THE *TESTING* PHASE. THESE WEAPONS MAY NOT EVEN BE *OPERATIONAL*.>
WUNNK
<THEN *WHY* ARE WE *PROTECTING* THEM?>
<BECAUSE OUR ORDERS SAY TO. AND BECAUSE WE ARE *SPETSNAZ*.>
<"ANY *MISSION*, ANY *TIME*, ANY *PLACE*.">
DA, SOLDAT?

WUNNK
‹GAS!›
‹WEAPONS HOLD! IT COULD BE INCENDIARY!›
‹CAPTAIN...?›
BOZHE MOY...

RRNG
RRNG
RRNG
OPENING.
THE ARMOR...
SURRENDER IT!
FIRE!!
AKKAKKAKKAKKAKKAKK

VZZZZZNNN
VZZZZNNN
VZZZZZA
AAIGH 01001000
GET DOWN.
SLICE

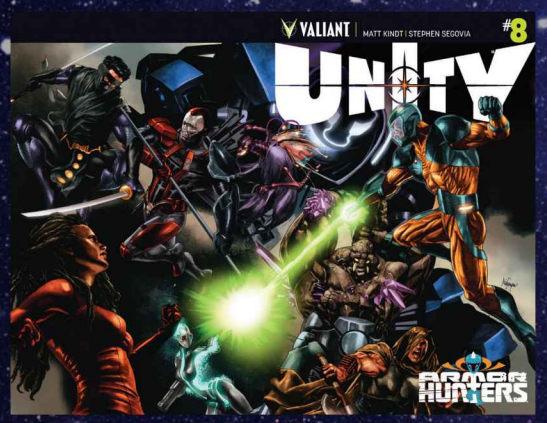
IT SHOULD'VE ENGAGED...US ALREADY.
WE GET A...WRONG LOCATION?
QUARTZ. LOOK.
FALSE TARGETS. ABSENT SENTIENCE.
EMPTY... SHELLS.
STREAMING TO PRIMARY.
CONTAINMENT COMPROMISED.
TO BE CONTINUED IN ARMOR HUNTERS #1!

ARMOR
HUNTERS
#1 | ON SALE IN JUNE

ARMOR HUNTERS®

EARTH WILL BE THE GREATEST HUNT OF ALL

ARMOR HUNTERS #1 (of 4)



UNITY #8

X-O MANOWAR #26

ARMOR HUNTERS: BLOODSHOT #1 (of 3)

ARMOR HUNTERS: HARBINGER #1 (of 3)

JUNE

- [ ] ARMOR HUNTERS #1 (of 4)
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AUGUST

- [ ] ARMOR HUNTERS #3 (of 4)
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SEPTEMBER

- [ ] ARMOR HUNTERS: BLOODSHOT #3 (of 3)
- [ ] ARMOR HUNTERS: HARBINGER #3 (of 3)
- [ ] UNITY #11
- [ ] X-O MANOWAR #29
- [ ] ARMOR HUNTERS #4 (of 4)

VALIANT FIRST

VALIANT FIRST

ARMOR HUNTERS

HERE COMES ARMAGEDDON

Superstar writer **Robert Venditti** on X-O Manowar's coming clash with a team of killers from beyond the stars

After two years and 25 issues of *X-O Manowar*, what's it like to be taking the reins for your first event mini-series? With Doug Braithwaite on board, what kind of tale can readers expect in *Armor Hunters* #1 in June?

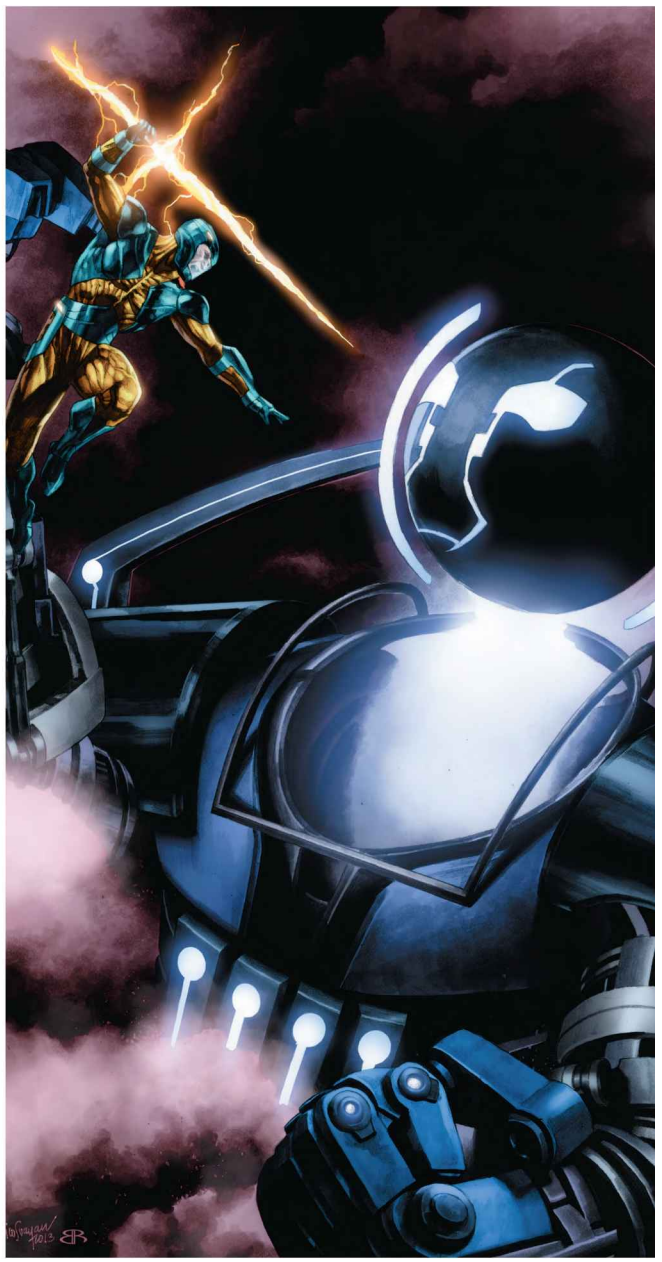
VENDITTI: *X-O Manowar* #1 was my first published work on a monthly title, so to be twenty-five issues in and writing a spinoff event mini-series is way more than I ever thought I'd accomplish. I was just hoping to make it to issue #12. There's a tremendous amount of coordination that goes into a story of this scope, but I love the challenge of it all.

Having Doug on board is the icing on the cake. He's a huge talent, and readers already know from his work on *Unity* that he's tailor-made for epic, action-fueled stories. *Armor Hunters* is going to be just that. The first six pages are the most brutal chunk of script I've ever written.

The title Armor Hunters seems to imply a big revelation —z that there is, in fact, more than one suit of ultra-powerful armor, X-O or otherwise. What can you tell us about the mythology behind the X-O Manowar armor and why the Armor Hunters have gone to such great lengths to track it down?

Readers who've been waiting over two years to learn the true origin of the Manowar armor, this is the story arc where all their questions will be answered. It's a mythology we're extremely excited to finally reveal, and it's one that I hope will surprise people.

As for why the Hunters have come all the way to Earth to destroy the armor, let's just say they have a score to settle. As X-O Manowar has been from the beginning, this isn't a story where the heroes and villains are clearly defined. Everyone has noble goals here. It's the way they go about them that becomes questionable.



When it comes to the Armor Hunters themselves, what can you tell us about the team? Does each member have a unique role? And did you have any specific source of inspiration in bringing them to life?

The initial concept was to create a team of aliens modeled after a special-forces squad, where each member has a specific role ranging from leader, to stealth, to communications, and so on. As the designs came in from Clayton Crain, I fleshed out those individual roles. I like them all, but my favorite has to be Ginger, the giant robot who also serves as the team's interstellar transport. It's the most adorable uber-death robot to ever grace a comic book page.

What is the scale of the story you've designed? Will the reverberations of the Armor Hunters' actions merely affect X-O Manowar and his allies? Or is the descent of the Armor Hunters something that will make the entire world sit up and take notice?

The scale is massive. It's the biggest thing Valiant has done to date, if for no other reason than the number of books and characters who'll be involved. In addition to the *Armor Hunters* event mini-series, the storyline will run through *X-O Manowar*, *Unity* . . . and some surprise titles as well. This is a battle the entire Valiant Universe will have to fight together. Or there won't be any universe left to fight for.

At this point, you've not only defined X-O Manowar, but also forced him into head-to-head confrontations with Ninjak and the Eternal Warrior as well. Will we see Aric run up against any other Valiant heroes as *Armor Hunters* progresses?

One of the most enjoyable aspects of working in a shared universe is the opportunity to cross paths with other heroes and villains. It's a goal I set for myself going all the way pack to my initial pitch for the series. While I've crossed a few characters off my list, there are plenty of others I still have my eye on. Who knows? Maybe *Armor Hunters* will allow to me to cross off a few more.

Between the events of "Planet Death" and "Unity," X-O Manowar has maintained a relentless pace, and Aric has barely been able to catch his breath. Yet, despite this, you've still managed to work quiet, poignant moments into the series. How important is this to you as a writer?

It's extremely important. *X-O MANOWAR* is a sci-fi, action epic first and foremost, but without strong characters to ground the story, the audience isn't going to care about the space battles and swordfights. I'm always looking for opportunities to infuse the series with character, whether in a flashback to Aric's childhood in the fourth century, or a quiet moment with him in the modern day. Those are the scenes I look forward to writing the most.

Recent events in the series have instituted a whole new status quo for Aric and his people. What kind of impact will Aric's newfound allegiance to the US government have on his character and actions heading into *Armor Hunters*?

"Allegiance" may be a strong word. Spinning out of Unity, the United States finally found a way to convince Aric to work for them. All Aric ever wanted was a place for his people to live free, and the great irony is that he finally accomplished his goal, but it came at a cost to his own personal freedom. The United States thinks they made a good bargain, but they'll soon realize all they've done is invite the Armor Hunters to their door.

Throughout the entire series, everyone has wanted the Manowar armor–the Vine, Aric, Ninjak, Unity, and now the U.S. What they'll all soon discover is that being inside the armor isn't a blessing. It's the absolute last place you'd ever want to be. ■

#24 SNEAK PREVIEW

VALIANT FIRST

X-O MANOWAR

DIPLOMACY

WRITER: ROBERT VENDITTI PENCILER: DIEGO BERNARD
INKER: ALISSON RODRIGUES COLORIST: BRIAN REBER LETTERER: DAVE SHARPE
ASSISTANT EDITOR: JOSH JOHNS EXECUTIVE EDITOR: WARREN SIMONS

SINCE THE MOMENT I CLAIMED THIS ARMOR, IT HAS BEEN A NEVER-ENDING WAR TO KEEP HOLD OF IT.
I HAVE LAID LOW ARMIES FROM BOTH EARTH AND THE STARS. I WILL DO THE SAME TO YOU, IF I MUST.
BUT IF THERE IS ONE LESSON WAR HAS TAUGHT ME, IT IS THAT IT IS BETTER TO NOT WAR.
NOW, TELL ME YOUR NAME.
M-MALGAM... MY NAME IS MALGAM.
MALGAM. I AM ARIC OF DACIA.
LET ME HELP--

NO!
NYAH!
KERRRANNGG
NO FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN US. JUST *ME* INSIDE THE ARMOR.
AND YOU *DEAD.*
YOU MAKE IT VERY *DIFFICULT* FOR ME TO BE *DIPLOMATIC.*
THE ROAD TO ARMOR HUNTERS CONTINUES IN X-O MANOWAR #24 and #25!

ARMOR HUNTERS
ROLL CALL

CHARACTER DESIGNS BY CLAYTON CRAIN

#1 SNEAK PREVIEW

VALIANT FIRST

RAI

SECTOR 2555.
BLACKWATER.
WE ARE DESTINED TO BE TURNED OVER AND RECYCLED INTO THE GREAT NOTHING.
CEASE YOUR INCESSANT PRATTLE. WE SIMPLY DISPOSE OF SAID PARCEL AND SECURE OUR CONTINUED SAFETY--
HALT, MEMBERS, AND ID YOURSELF.
WE'VE BEEN FOUND OUT! THE CONSTABLE'S GOT A PEEP-MAIL SUIT ON. WE'RE WALKING COMPOST.
QUIET!
CEASE YOUR ACTIVITY AND SURRENDER YOURSELVES TO SCAN.
WE CAN'T BE CAPTURED.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO--?

UNIDENTIFIED WEAPON IN USE
fzzBLAM BLAM
EXPEDITE THE PROCESS, IMBECILE.
I AM. I AM.
IF WE END UP IN THE HISTORY SCROLLS THAT MEANS WE'RE DEAD.
THERE HASN'T BEEN A MURDER IN JAPAN IN A THOUSAND YEARS.
CORRECT. AND THAT'S WHY YOU BETTER HOPE WE DID ENOUGH TO DESTROY THE EVIDENCE OR WE'LL BOTH END UP IN THE SOD CELLS.
WHY WOULD THEY DUMP US IN THE RECYCLING UNIT...?
BECAUSE WE WILL BE CORPSES IF THEY FIND OUT.
NNGH!
WE WILL BE IN THE HISTORY SCROLLS FOR THIS.
YOU BETTER HOPE NOT.
THERE!
SWISH

SPLSH
I write on paper sometimes.
I like the old ways. Even though real paper is expensive. Like a week's work for one sheaf. I don't bio on it. I use scrolls for that throwaway stuff.
OH, FATHER, HELP US!
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?!
I record legends on paper. Old stories. Important stories. That's the stuff that deserves to be on real paper.

I always thought the scroll-bios were pointless. For me anyway. Until I actually do something or see something interesting. So why am I writing this? Why start my bio today?
HELP! WHERE ARE THE CONSTABLES?!
Because today I saw something that no one will forget for a thousand years.

I knew something was up when I saw those two Raddies sneaking around. Those guys hate Father. Hate Japan. Hate Rai. "Anything that runs on electricity is evil." Weirdos. Things have been getting weird the last few weeks. They're up to something big.
Usually they do Terra-attacks or kill Fish-Eyes. The Fish-Eyes are just PTs (Positronic Minds... artificial intelligence) but lately there's been actual fights between real people. I'm explaining it all, not for you, but for future gens that will probably speak a different speak and not understand half of what I write.
Those Raddies just killed a person. First time in a thousand years. Bad thing, I know. But... this meant I was going to achieve one of my main life goals: see Rai in person.

He only squashes the biggest malware. Organized crime, ingestible viruses, that kind of thing. And murder? He is definitely going to show up for this. Finally!
Rai has only been to our sector one time in the last fifty years. So this is news.
...IF THEY'D JUST GET RID OF THE DAMN PTs THE RADDIES WOULDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO FIGHT ABOUT.
...JUST IN... REPORTS OF THE FIRST UNLAWFUL DEATH IN JAPAN IN OVER ONE THOUSAND YEARS. NO WORD YET FROM FATHER BUT WE CAN REST ASSURED THAT RAI WILL CERTAINLY BE CALLED UPON...
TERRIBLE.
MATTER OF TIME. RADDIES WILL GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO FREE THE PTs.
WHY DON'T THEY JUST FREE THEM, THEN?
THAT'S THE CATCH. THE PTs DON'T WANT TO BE FREE.
MOM! DAD!
DID YOU SEE? RAI IS COMING!
I was sure of it.

I wondered how far away he was? How many sectors? Did he have a Rai-cycle? Would he come rolling in to our sector?
How long would it take? If you walked from the bottom of Japan to the top sector it would take you at least a month. That's without taking breaks.
VS NEWS
SECTOR 3001.
WAR CORRIDOR.
I've only ever been to two other sectors, but I'm only sixteen. My parents were sixty before they ever even saw real stars in the sky (20 sectors away and a 3-day journey.)
Mom and Dad argue about the PTs again. But everyone has them.
You get one when you turn ten. Positrons. We don't use the "R" word anymore. Raddies insist they don't like it. But Dad says the PTs don't have feelings.
They're manufactured. Super-elaborate AI that grows over time organically with you. A life-companion. They evolve but they aren't "people." But they sure look real.
That's why they put the blue circle on their head so you can tell the difference...

See, you can do anything to a PT. If it breaks or accidentally "dies" they can just grow you a new one. PTs are assigned to be your helper. Your companion.
Population is always a problem. Real estate is measured and bought by the centimeter. So we get a PT to keep us company.
Mom says it's to keep us from wanting to have babies.
You can't have babies unless Father says you can.
Father is the boss of Japan. He runs everything. Keeps the food growing. Makes new jobs. Keeps Japan running.
But Father needs a helper too. His helper is Rai.
TO BE CONTINUED IN RAI #1!

RAI
霊
#1 | ON SALE IN MAY

A BRANB NEW ERA...

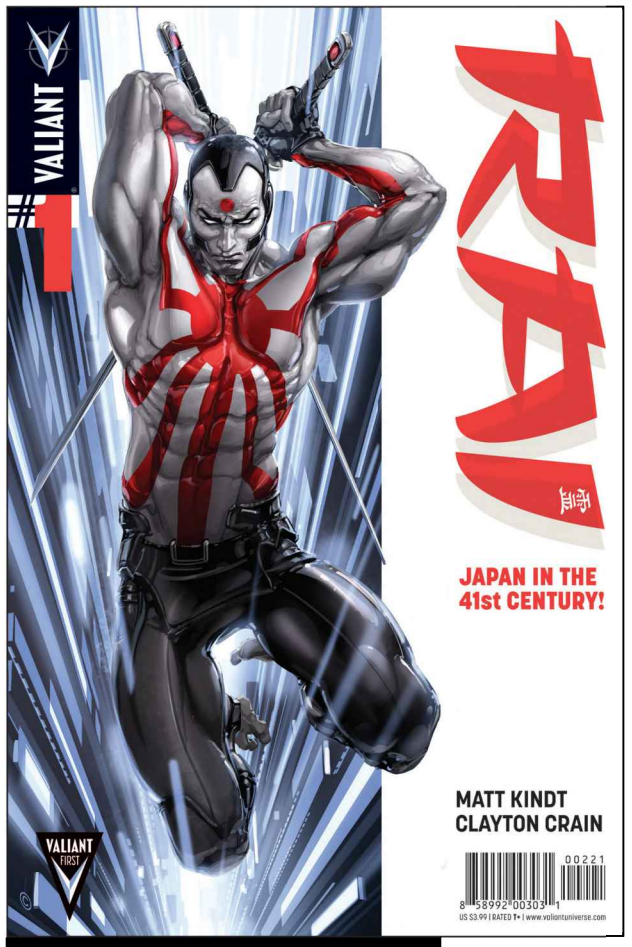
INSIDE THE VALIANT FIRST INITIATIVE

Beginning this May, get ready to read **VALIANT FIRST**.

In 2012, Valiant mounted one of the biggest debuts by a new publisher in more than a decade.

In 2013, we maintained that momentum, expanded our line with new hit titles like *Quantum and Woody* and *Unity*, and managed to side-step the sophomore slump by carefully managing our growth.

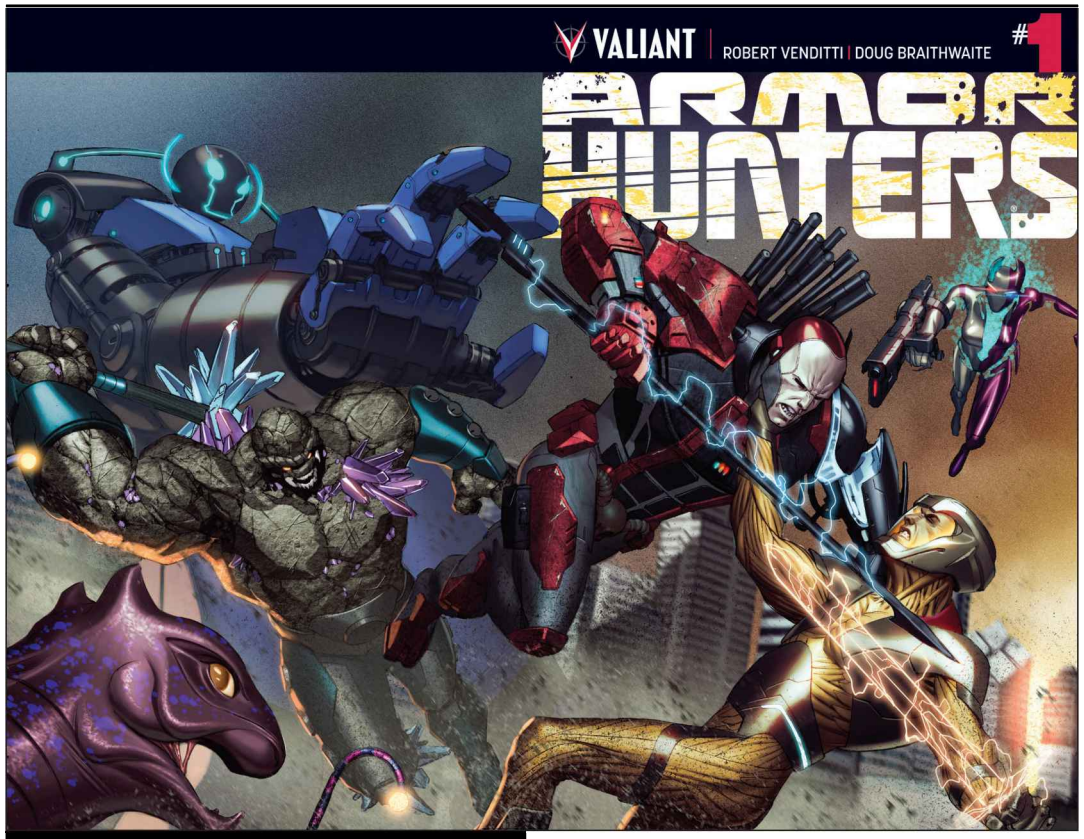
And now, with a steady foundation in place, we're dedicating ourselves to bringing new readers through the door each and every month–that is what **VALIANT FIRST** is all about. Beginning in May with Rai #1–and continuing with Armor Hunters #1 in June–we're giving fans a new reason to look to Valiant each and every month with a new, major #1 release from some of the industry's most talented creators. But that doesn't mean an end to our motto of "slow and steady." By the end of the year, Valiant will still be producing no more than nine titles per month–and each one will continue to be built with new readers in mind.



RAI #1 COVER BY CLAYTON CRAIN

Valiant is still very much in the first phase of its existence. There are many readers out there who have yet to read their first Valiant comic. **VALIANT FIRST** is a re-dedication of our principal mission–to make

VALIANT FIRST



ARMOR HUNTERS #1 COVER BY JORGE MOLINA

great comics that introduce a new generation to Valiant's beloved heroes.

The Valiant style of making and marketing comics is quickly becoming the industry standard. Our response is to raise the bar even higher. **VALIANT FIRST** is where you will see us up our game. Our launch title – Rai #1–is the perfect example. Clayton Crain delivering mind-blowing, fully painted interiors... Matt Kindt showing us what the world looks like 2000 years in the future...That is Valiant moving to the next level. That is **VALIANT FIRST**.

Over the next year, we'll be working one-on-one with stores across the country to put our books in their customers' hands. To make new Valiant fans with each passing month. And to make sure that when you think of great comics, you think of **VALIANT FIRST**. ■

EVERY WEDNESDAY IS NEW COMIC BOOK DAY!

"The only place to be on Wednesdays is at your local comic shop"
– Dan M. Boston, Mass.

"Free Comic Book Day is amazing, but my comic shop does so many other great things all year long."
– Jason B. Orlando, FL

"My comic shop is the center of pop-culture in our community"
– Emily T. Lima, OH

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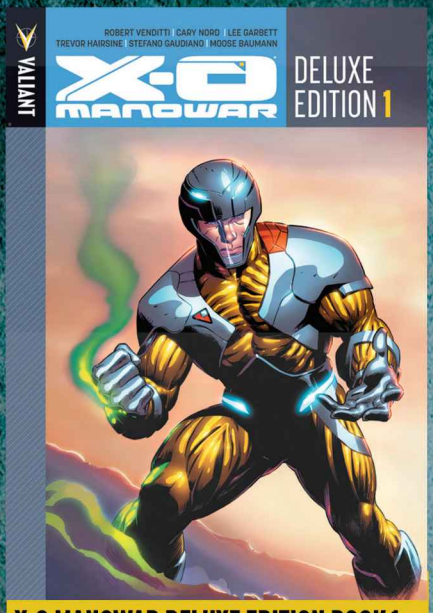
VALIANT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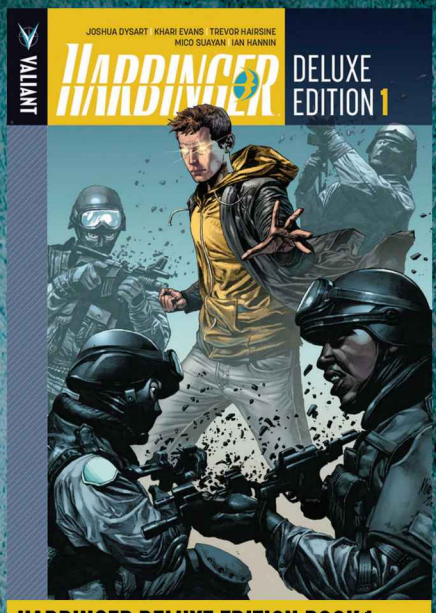
ROBERT VENDITTI | CARY NORD | LEE GARBETT
TREVOR HAIRSINE | STEFANO GAUDIANO | MOOSE BAUMANN
X-O MANOWAR
DELUXE EDITION 1

X-O MANOWAR DELUXE EDITION BOOK 1
COLLECTING X-O MANOWAR #1-14



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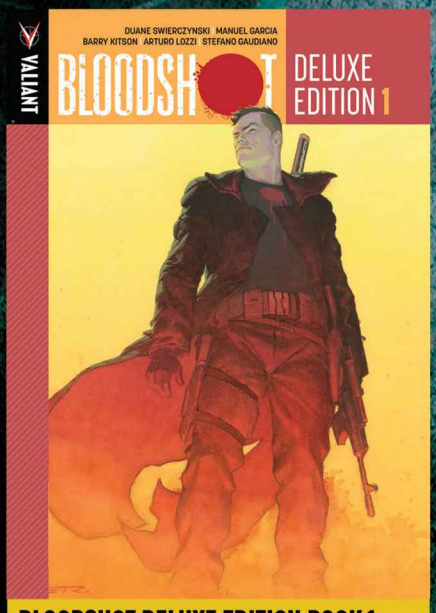

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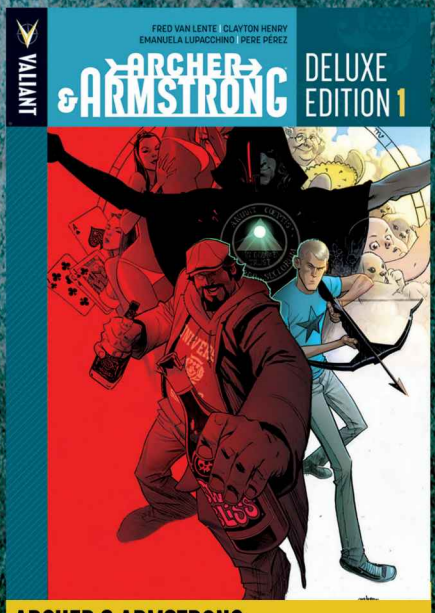

ARCHER & ARMSTRONG DELUXE EDITION BOOK 1
COLLECTING ARCHER & ARMSTRONG #0-13

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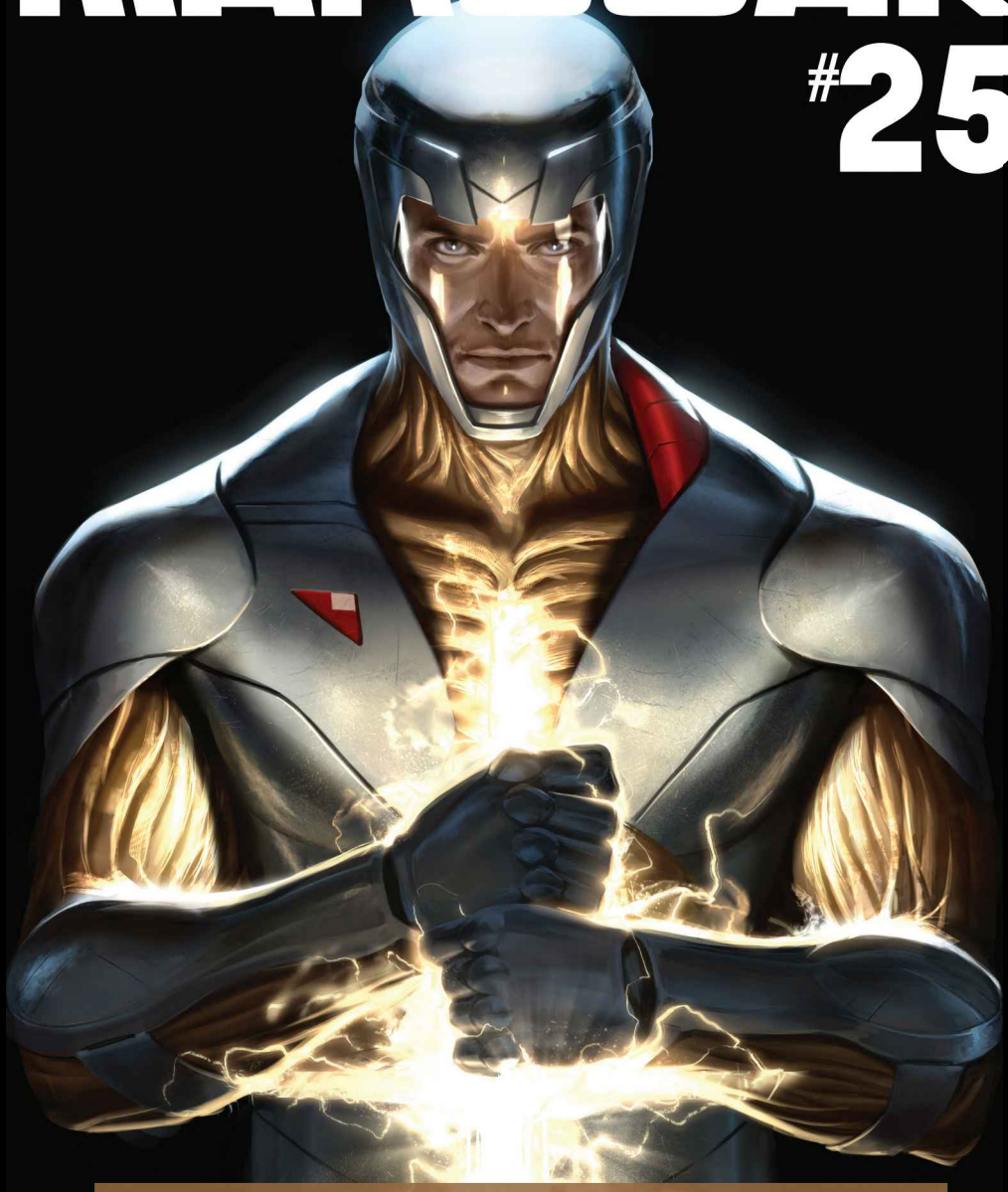
ANNIVERSARY SPECTACULAR

X-O MANOWAR

#25



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MAY 2014

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